

Manager clears Sachin denial

CRICINFO, undated

In a new twist to the Sachin Tendulkar retirement story it has emerged that he is yet to make an official statement on the issue...

"That was my statement on Tendulkar's behalf," Shukla, also a vice-president of the Indian board, said while referring to the denial.

Tendulkar's statement sought to end speculation over his retiring from one-day cricket after India's home engagements against Australia and Pakistan later this season...

The confusion also stemmed from the post-match press conference at The Oval. Rahul Dravid was asked to comment on reports that Tendulkar had planned to retire...

Korea-India

FROM PAGE 17

chance to restore parity in the closing 10 minutes when they forced two penalty corners, but failed to capitalise on them.

South Korean captain Seo Jong Ho conceded his team found it difficult to hold on to their slender lead in the closing stages.

"It's hard to keep a one-goal lead. They kept attacking in the closing minutes and we found it difficult to defend it," he said.

South Korea's early supremacy resulted in a seventh-minute goal when Keun deflected in a Jang Jung Hyun cross from the left. They kept testing the Malaysian defence, but found it difficult to beat goalkeeper Kumar Subramaniam.

The Malaysian goalkeeper had a good game, saving five penalty-corner shots to keep the South Koreans at bay.

"I think he (Subramaniam) is the best goalkeeper in this tournament," said Malaysian captain Misron.

"Our target was to qualify for the semi-finals. We knew anything could happen in the semi-finals. We tried our best in the last 10 minutes, but no luck."

Malaysia came back strongly in the second half to make it 1-1 in the 38th minute, with Misron smartly deflecting in a defence-splitting pass from Tajuddin Ahmad to catch goalkeeper Ko Dong Sik on the wrong-foot.

Stung by the goal, South Korea launched an all-out attack and earned four penalty corners in quick succession before gaining a 2-1 lead in the 60th minute.

Hoon capped a solo run with a brilliant goal as he moved into the striking circle from the left after dodging past a couple of defenders and then beat the Malaysian goalkeeper with an angular placement.

Malaysia did not give up and looked threatening in the closing stages, but the equaliser remained elusive.

Sol extends

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"It's dragged on a bit but everything's been resolved," he said. "There's always a bit of speculation around the transfer window but thankfully that's over now and I can just concentrate on playing football."

"The club's moving forward with a talented squad and plans for the new training ground. The club is certainly going in the right direction."

Kuznetsova

FROM PAGE 20

But after Chakvetadze held to open the second set, Kuznetsova began a rally by denying Chakvetadze on four break points, then holding to start a run in which she won 22 of 25 points, breaking three times to claim the second set.

Mahub, Rumi

FROM PAGE 17

distributed the prizes. Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation president Mohammad Abu Solaiman Chowdhury was also present on the occasion.

Henin does

FROM PAGE 20

Henin returned to the courts with renewed vigour and enthusiasm in February and since then she has won six titles out of the 10 she has competed in including her fourth French Open title in June.

The six-time Grand Slam winner is already assured of finishing the year as world No.1 while Kuznetsova will rise to a career-best second win or lose in the final.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Winners of the Sam Open table tennis tournament pose with chief guest Information Secretary Didarul Anwar during the presentation ceremony at the NSC Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

The art of Power



CRICINFO, undated

It's said that some cricketers belong to a different era. Ramesh Powar belongs to a different century.

He is from an age when cricketers came in different shapes and sizes, wore oversized red sunglasses and delectable hair bands, and bowled slow, really slow. We've heard about the adrenaalin rushes, speed barriers and shoulder-aches that the fastest bowlers experience. Now it's time to celebrate the slowest among the slow.

Over his last five games Powar has defied the modern notion that bowling in one-day cricket is about restriction. In a high-scoring series he has rarely dented the ball in at a flat trajectory, never beaten batsmen with speed. He has wound the clock back to the golden age of cricket, the Edwardian twilight preceding the first World War, and risked conceding runs for wicket-taking rewards. Expectedly he has got wickets (six in five games); surprisingly he has been economical (4.41). Only Andrew Flintoff, who has played two games fewer, has done better.

A ten-minute chat with Saqlain Mushtaq, when the Indians played Sussex during the early part of the tour, made a big impact. Powar was fretting over not getting any of the Indian batsmen out in the nets. Saqlain's advice was simple: "If you succeed in making these guys defend you, then you are bowling very well. Don't think of getting a Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar or a Rahul Dravid out. Even if you are able to bother them in the nets, it's good enough."

Powar has grown in confidence with every game since, so much so that he has not hesitated in slowing down his pace considerably. He usually operates in the 45-to-55 mph range. Occasionally, especially when he bowls the undercutter that goes straight, he gets slightly faster. More often, when he simply lobbs up a moonball that goes straight, he gets slower. Once he dropped as low as 41mph. He admits it's his slowest pace yet but, fascinatingly, thinks he can "easily get slower."

At Edgbaston, in the third game of the series, brought on in the 16th over, with Ian Bell and Alastair Cook at the crease, Powar slipped in a really slow one and nailed Cook on the top-edged sweep.

"In the third game it struck me that I bowl a little slower, they might sweep," he said. "I knew they wouldn't try to hit over the fence because they rely on batsmen like KP (Pietersen) and Bell to stay at the wicket. They couldn't afford to take many chances. So I've been taking chances against Cook, Bell, (Paul) Collingwood and Pietersen."

It's helped that Powar is usually operating with Piyyush Chawla, the legspinner, who is comparatively faster. "It always helps with Piyyush bowling at the other end, because the batsmen tend to always go after those bowling quicker. So, suddenly when the slower bowlers come on, it becomes difficult for them to work around it. And with my kind of pace, I don't think they can do that easily."

Does he think he can slow it down further? "For left-handers I might go a lot slower because they play against the spin. For right-handers I think it's fine. Because I'm an open-chested bowler, I can adjust my action easily. I deliver the ball behind my ear and lose pace since I am a side-arm bowler. And since I've been bowling like this for seven-eight years, I know how to lose pace with the same action. Sometimes you don't tweak the wrist - just let it go. Sometimes you hold the ball in the palm, sometimes you hold it in two fingers rather than three. There are a lot of ways to lose pace and I've worked on different methods in the nets."

Powar's Headingley dismissal of Ravi Bopara, one of England's best batsmen against spin, underlined the value of pace variations. Two quick ones, at around the 55mph mark, were followed by a straight dolly, lobbed up at 42.4mph. Bopara, completely deceived, popped a simple return catch.

"They had changed the ball just then," Powar said. "It was a newish ball and I knew that tossing it up may help getting some bounce. Maybe he didn't expect it to spin or bounce that much. There was not much spin but some extra bounce."

Powar anticipates the batsmen's intentions much better these days. He has always been a shrewd bowler but thinks his gut feel plays up more often these days. Paul Collingwood's case is worth mentioning. "Collingwood always played the chip shot against me (lobbing over midwicket). So I decided not to bowl any offbreaks that will help that chip shot. In ten balls I will probably bowl seven straight balls to him. I'm guessing better right now."

The straight one which he utilises so effectively was mastered by watching a great legspinner on television. "I learned that delivery watching Shane Warne bowl. I used to try it earlier also but it used to spin a bit. That's maybe because at the Wankhede anything spins. When I tried it here in England at the beginning of the tour, it was going straight really well. I don't know whether the release has changed slightly but it is working. That's all that matters."

Chandana, 35, on Wednesday channel Geo reported. Cricinfo adds: After comparing the incident with the one that involved Zinedine Zidane at the football World Cup final last year and himself with Bollywood actor Salman Khan, he said he was paying the price of fame. The media, he said, portrayed him as a villain because "Shoaib controversies sell their papers."

The main theme, though, was contrition. "If Pakistan lose [in the ICC World Twenty20] because of bowling, I will never be able to forgive myself." He also reiterated his commitment for the Pakistan team and said, "I have played with passion for Pakistan. It means something to me. I have turned down a lucrative contract with ICL [Indian Cricket League]."



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapakse has asked the country's sports minister to investigate all-rounder Upul Chandana's hasty retirement.

"The president asked me to go into the reasons which led Chandana to announce his retirement," Gamini Lokuge told AFP Saturday.

Lokuge said he would invite Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) officials and the national selection panel to discuss the matter.

"Chandana had told the press that he was treated unfairly. So we have a duty to look into his grievances. If corrective action is needed, we will take them," Lokuge said.

He said it was most likely the president himself would take part in the meeting which is expected before Monday.

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Gilly happy at 20?



MALCOLM CONN

If Shane Warne could hold his catches as well as he hold a grudge, Australia may not have lost the Ashes in 2005.

That way he would not have missed the relatively simple slips catch he dropped off Kevin Pietersen, allowing the former South African to score a century and save the last Test at The Oval, giving England its first Ashes series victory in two decades.

By ranking Adam Gilchrist at a lowly No.20 and Steve Waugh a laughable No.26 among the cricketers he played with or against, Warne has once again exposed his immaturity and petty jealousies.

It is yet another example of why he was overlooked for both those players in leadership roles, much to his lasting anguish.

Waugh has already laughed off the schoolboy sledge and Gilchrist smiled broadly when asked about it in South Africa this week.

"He's done enough in the game and played enough cricket to be warranted his own opinion on who he's played with and against," Gilchrist told The Weekend Australian.

"As far as my position is concerned, to be in his top 20, given the amount of cricketers he has played with and against over the years, well it's a wonderful compliment."

Warne offered some wonderful theatre on the field and the game will miss that as much as his great bowling, but there is a compelling case to suggest that Gilchrist may just be the greatest entertainer the game has seen.

Not only are Gilchrist's batting achievements absolute world-class - 5353 runs at 48.66 with 17 centuries in 90 Tests - the way the potent left-hander has thrashed and bludgeoned those runs has left even the incomparable Don Bradman in his wake.

Gilchrist, 35, has scored more than 82 runs from every 100 balls he has faced in Test matches, by far and away the best of any batsman with more than 2000 runs.

Four years ago, a number of former Australian greats were asked to rank the 10 best centuries in Australian history.

Greg Chappell simply said: "Adam Gilchrist has eight so far. Those are my top eight."

Despite all his heroics with the bat, Gilchrist defines himself with his wicketkeeping.

For Warne to suggest that Gilchrist was a batsman who was improving as a wicketkeeper adds ignorance to immaturity.

Gilchrist, relatively tall and gangly for a keeper, was always going to have a tough time behind the stumps following Ian Healy, who just may have been the greatest gloveman of all time.

Yet in 70 Tests with Warne, Gilchrist has claimed more stumpings (20) and overall dismissals (39) off the champion leg-spinner than Healy did (15 and 34) in 74 Tests.

Not that Gilchrist puts any great store in those impressive numbers.

"What does that mean? Who knows?" Gilchrist said.

"I've never been one to rely on stats to be the be-all and end-of-all of how you judge a cricketer."

"What I do know is I can't question anyone rating Ian Healy's keeping as the best they've ever seen because I think that, too."

"I totally understand Warne having a very fond memory and view of what Ian Healy did in partnership with him."

Just 14 behind equalling Healy's record of 395 dismissals in 119 Tests, Gilchrist should beat it by mid-summer if he continues his average of just under four dismissals a Test.

And Gilchrist plays down approaching milestones.

"I did a little bit too much press approaching my 300th dismissal, which, if all went well, was going to be

Old Trafford during the Ashes in 2005, and I had probably my worst day behind the sticks," he recalled.

There is some irony in the constant questioning of Gilchrist about when he is going to retire.

Last summer, he came within one ball of equalling Viv Richards' record for the fastest century - 56 balls - during a manic batting display in the Perth Test against England.

And his last innings was a blazing 149 in just 104 balls to set up victory in the World Cup final.

"I've heard indirectly some people think that might be the best one to finish on," Gilchrist said. "I can understand that."

"I've had a bit more inconsistency in my batting in the last 12 to 18 months compared to what I had in the first part of my career."

"Whether that's an age thing or bowlers have worked me out a bit more, I don't know. England certainly had great plans in 2005 and executed them beautifully."

His Test batting average has fallen from 55.65 going into that Ashes tour to 48.66 two years later, although his one-day average is a constant 36 with a strike rate of almost a run a ball.

"We won't sit back and accept a falling away of our standards just because we've lost some great players," Gilchrist said of the retirements of Warne, Glenn McGrath, Justin Langer and Damien Martyn.

Gilchrist has a great sense of excitement attempting to maintain Australia's exceptional standards without them.

"That runs far deeper as a reason to play than whether I get a hundred or take five catches," he said.

"When you get time away from the game you just think about how much you enjoy it. How much you really love it. I still have that desire to do it."

(Revered cricket journalist Malcolm Conn wrote this for the Australian website).

The chase works

FROM PAGE 17

off four overs, spurred Pakistan to a 54-run win against Zimbabwe. Shahid Afridi also scalped 3 for 17 as Zimbabwe were restricted to 127 for 8 in 20 overs, chasing Pakistan's 181.

Gul rocked Zimbabwe's chase by dismissing Vusi Sibanda and Chamu Chibhabha off successive deliveries with the score on 16. Zimbabwe went on to lose six wickets for 35 runs and their chase went off the rails.

Pakistan had also got off to a poor start, losing their first three wickets for 61 before Shoaib Malik ran amok, scoring 64 off 37 balls. He hit four sixes and three fours and added 50 for the fourth wicket with Younis Khan. Malik dominated the innings towards the final overs and remained unbeaten as Pakistan stacked up 181 for 6.

Shaun Pollock has said any team could fancy their chances at the ICC World Twenty20, because of the quick-paced nature of the game.

"It's too fast," Pollock told the Australian. "It's a bit of a sprint. If one-day cricket is an 800-metre race, then Twenty20 is 100 metres."

"If you get off to a bad start you can lose the game regardless of who you are playing."

The South African team have been called "chokers" in the past, due to their inability to succeed in the World Cup for the 50-over format. However, Pollock indicated that the possibility was less in Twenty20. "I don't think there's really time to choke, everything happens so quickly," Pollock said. After an infamous rain rule denied them a final berth at the 1992 World Cup, South Africa have stumbled ever since in the World Cup, having twice missed out against Australia - a thrilling tie in 1999 and a lop-sided contest earlier this year in the West Indies.

Pollock was also the captain of the team that had a disastrous tournament at home in the 2003 World Cup, which they exited in the first stage. Many critics felt the commitments to organisers and sponsors distracted the players then, something Pollock said has been avoided this time around. "We are very focussed on making sure all our commitments are out of the way."

South Africa wrapped all their media and sponsorship obligations in Johannesburg before they left for a training centre in Potchefstroom, where they are undergoing preparations for five days in the lead-up to the tournament. Australia, winners

Robben thanks

FROM PAGE 20

I had to fly so there was no time to say goodbye.

"If I have time I would want to come back and say goodbye to everybody because I think it is important. To the fans I owe a big thank you because they were always good to me, I always had great support off them and I had a good relationship with them as well."

"I want to thank them for all the great support they gave me, it must have been frustrating for them to see me injured so many times. But every time I came back I always got a great reception and a warm welcome, so I want to thank them very much and I really enjoyed playing in front of them every time."

Real reveal

FROM PAGE 20

Portugal is confident Real's current transfer policy is the correct one, though.

"The club have signed well. (Coach Bernd) Schuster is able to count on players who can play in the Madrid style for the next three, four or five years."

Alonso to retire?

FROM PAGE 20

ABC daily newspaper suggested Alonso is set for a return to Renault, with whom he won both of his world championship titles, in 2005 and 2006.

"The chairman of the Spanish arm of Renault, Olivier Murguet, has affirmed in an interview with that talks on Alonso's return to Renault are at an advanced stage," said the paper.

Having been usurped this season by the talents of rookie teammate Hamilton, Alonso has now become the focus of an investigation by the sport's ruling body the International Motoring Federation (FIA).

The FIA said Friday they would look into the possibility that a dossier containing secret information about Ferrari's tyre and car set-ups had found its way to McLaren.

According to some reports the secret dossier found its way to Alonso, via McLaren team test driver Pedro de la Rosa.

It's anybody's game

CRICINFO, undated



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of the 2003 World Cup, also trained in the same centre ahead of their victorious campaign.

"We can go off to Potch and prepare for the tournament for five days leading up, where we just focus wholly and solely on cricket," Pollock said before the team left. "Hopefully that bears fruit in the time to come. Being the host nation, there are always more commitments, so to get them out of the way and be able to concentrate on cricket is what we've learnt from last time."

Pollock also said that he would like to move up the batting order as he felt that four overs of bowling would not be enough for him to feel involved in the game. "It would be nice to be put up the order and be able to express yourself," he said. "That's the one bonus. If you were only a bowler in this form of the game it would be pretty depressing."

He also expressed his views on the omission of Jacques Kallis from the team. "It's obviously a big call by the selectors," Pollock said. "He has voiced some disappointment and you can understand that."

Kallis has been South Africa's batting mainstay over the years and was the team's top run-getter at the World Cup earlier this year. "Usually he's the first or second name put down on a piece of paper when you're selecting the side, so he would have been very surprised by the fact he wasn't included," Pollock said. "Being a home event, he would have loved to play in front of his own home crowd, so that would have added to the disappointment. The big plus from the way he has reacted is that it answers the question about what the guys think of a Twenty20 tournament."

Pollock said Kallis' displeasure at not being selected was an indication of the team's eagerness to perform

well at the tournament. "If Jacques, after all the cricket he has played and all he has achieved, is disappointed about not being part of it, then you realise it is going to be a special event. We're going to be really trying hard to try to win it."

Taufeeq Umar scored an unbeaten century and shared a 107-run opening partnership with Khalid Latif to guide Pakistan A to a seven-wicket victory over Australia A in the second ODI in Sheikhupura. The victory also enabled Pakistan to win the series with one match remaining.

Chasing Australia's 267 in a match shortened to 40-overs a side, the Pakistan openers dictated terms right from the start as both Latif and Taufeeq dealt mainly in boundaries. Latif (54 off 64 deliveries) hit seven fours and a six before becoming offspinner Dan Cullen's only victim of the match.

Yasir Hameed, who scored an unbeaten century in the previous match, could only manage a second-ball duck, falling leg-before to James Hopes. Faisal Iqbal, Pakistan's captain, however, joined Taufeeq in an 118-run partnership, dashing Australia's hopes of a comeback not only in the match but the series as well.

BRIEF SCORES AUSTRALIA: 267 for 9 (Hussey 82, Jaques 72, Tanvir 4-47) PAKISTAN: 271 for 3 (Taufeeq 113*, Faisal 56) Result: Pakistan won by seven wickets.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key and a message to be deciphered.

CRYPTOQUIP YZSUAGXU UM UYC Y UGXMZE RSIMRRBGZ CYE, SUM DASYSY QUD BYQSAIE MPDZAEM IMPYTFMC GFIGBBZMC. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TUNES ARE PLAYABLE ON ANY OLD SOUND SYSTEM, WOULD THAT BE CALLED STEREO-TYPICAL MUSIC? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals H